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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
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INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 2095  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA PRIORITY 0050  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4887  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 4095  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2011  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6935  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 8013  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5317  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0563  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 5202  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 1762  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 0037  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2025  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 001234

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FROM AMBASSADOR CROCKER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2017

TAGS: [AF](#) [PK](#) [PNAT](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: VIOLENCE ERUPTS AT DEMONSTRATIONS OVER CHIEF  
JUSTICE CONTROVERSY

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Fighting broke out between the police and demonstrators in front of Pakistan's Supreme Court the afternoon of March 16, the second day of the Supreme Judicial Council's proceeding against Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. Demonstrations in other cities around Pakistan were tense but less violent than the widely-telecast confrontations in Islamabad. (Note: Unofficial estimates of crowd size were less than a thousand total in various locations in Islamabad; about 1,200 in Peshawar; about 1,000 in Karachi; and less than 1,000 in Lahore. End Note.) RSO Islamabad reports that demonstrators in Islamabad self-segregated, with representatives of religious parties forming one group, lawyers another, and civil society and mainline political groups another. Television reports showed demonstrators near the Supreme Court throwing rocks at police, who responded by firing tear gas into crowds of several hundred protesters. Television stations carried footage of protesters beating a police officer and throwing rocks. (Note: According to RSO, only the religious parties attacked the police. End Note.) Press reports indicate that at least two journalists were injured in the disturbances. A PPP contact called the Embassy from the protests and said that the PPP was present to show solidarity with the Chief Justice, not to harass the police or to mingle with the religious parties.

12. (U) Late in the afternoon, police stormed the Islamabad office of GEO television. The Lahore office of GEO continued to broadcast while lead reporter Hamid Mir, in Islamabad, described police beating employees and breaking equipment. Shortly after Mir went off the air, Minister of Information Durrani issued a public statement saying the police had had no right to enter the newsroom.

13. (C) Police took great pains to keep protests small. Roadblocks around the perimeter of Islamabad and every few

miles after that turned back almost anyone who might be a protester. Police arrested or restricted the movements of lawyers and political opposition leaders overnight and throughout the day. In Lahore, police arrested hundreds of attorneys and placed Jamaati Islami leader Liaqat Baloch and PPP-P leader Qasim Zia under house arrest. After the Lahore protests turned out to be relatively calm, police released the lawyers. In Islamabad, police arrested MMA leaders Qazi Hussain Ahmed and Hafiz Hussain Ahmed as they marched towards the Supreme Court after Friday prayers. PPP reported that police arrested several PPP members at the site of Islamabad protests. PML-N reported that 17 of their leaders were under arrest.

¶4. (SBU) RSOs throughout Pakistan reported that no official Americans were injured in the protests. We have received no information of any Americans injured in the demonstrations. We are aware of no demonstrations scheduled for the weekend.

¶5. (C) Comment: By Islamabad standards, these demonstrations have been small and relatively non-violent. This is especially true when compared to February 2006 demonstrations associated with the Danish cartoon controversy. Thus far, the mainline opposition parties have taken pains not to be seen cooperating with the religious parties in the protests. Indeed, the Chief Justice controversy has not galvanized the opposition into a unified entity nor has it captured widespread support. We shall continue to monitor this situation and report as appropriate.

End Comment

CROCKER